104-10104-10398

OGC SUBJE:CT KENN. Y ASSASINATION-GARRISON

OGC 68-1547

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68-3362/1

24 July 1968

The Honorable Richard B. Russell, Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. Chairman:

I have been receiving a spate of letters [illegible] from the television appearance of a so-called [illegible], Mort Sahl, on the Merv Griffin show of 8 July. [illegible] interviewed on that program, Sahl made ridiculous allegations against the Agency, some of which appear on page 5 of the attached memorandum. This paper is a bit long, I fear, but it does give you a rather good round-up of what Garrison has been saying with respect to the Agency and the assassination of President Kennedy.

I write you this letter, because I am concerned that [illegible] may receive inquiries from senatorial colleagues as a result of this Mort Sahl appearance. I want you to be informed and thereby prepared to deal with any such questions.

Respectfully,

(Signed) Richard Helms

Richard Helms
Director

JFK ACT RELEASE

Attachment - 1
"Jim Garrison and the CIA"

Identical letter with attachment set to Congressman Rivers.

RHelms/ecd - 24/7/68
Distribution: Orig - addressee
1 - w/att. Mr. Maury
1 - w/o att. Mr. Rocca
1 - ER

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Jim Garrison and the CIA

1. According to an article in the 12 July New York Times, a copy of which is attached, New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison asserts that his office has established "liaison" with a "foreign intelligence agency" which had "penetrated the forces involved in the assassination of President Kennedy." The article suggests that one William C. Wood (aka Bill Boxley), purportedly a CIA employee for "two to five years in the 1950's," has served as Garrison's representative in contacting the "foreign intelligence agency." The remainder of the article is a rehash of Garrison's current assassination theory which assigns the role of principal villain to "elements in CIA."

2. Garrison's colorful but unsupported introduction of a mysterious "foreign intelligence agency" into his conspiracy concoction is completely in character with his performance during the past eighteen months. First, Garrison habitually "reveals" sensational "facts" in order to avoid responding to, and to divert attention from, irrefutable criticism of his case. In this instance, Garrison's revelations were stimulated by requests to comment on a 25,000-word article by Edward Jay Epstein in the 13 July New Yorker magazine. The article is a comprehensive, carefully written attack on Garrison's methods and motives. Epstein, a Harvard professor who is widely regarded as the most knowledgeable and responsible critic of the Warren Commission Report, is dismissed by Garrison as "an amateur."

3. It is also standard procedure for Garrison to introduce "experts" or "reliable informants" to buttress his "facts" in the absence of documentary evidence. The fact that such past experts or informants as David Ferrie, Perry Russo, Donald Norton, and Gordon Novel all were subsequently discredited and impeached (Russo was convicted of perjury) has not deterred Garrison from unveiling yet one more reliable operative, William C. Wood, cloaked in a pseudonym (Bill Boxley), purportedly a former CIA employee and Garrison's "liaison with a foreign intelligence agency." In fact, Wood was a CIA employee from December 1950 until January 1953. His resignation was requested because of alcoholism, a condition from which he had not recovered as recently as February 1967.

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4. A third feature of Garrison's public pronouncements of dramatic developments is, what by now has become virtually an all-consuming preoccupation with CIA as the arch villain of his sundry conspiracy theories. Garrison's critics, including at least one former member of his staff, believe that Garrison has concentrated his fire on CIA because the Agency will not "talk back," because the CIA's "secrecy" absolves Garrison of the need to marshal facts and evidence, and because two of Garrison's closest collaborators -- Mark Lane and Mort Sahl -- are fanatically hostile to the Agency. A brief review of Garrison's treatment of CIA since his investigation first came to light in February 1967 provides interesting insights into Garrison's overall respect for consistency, orthodox legal processes, and truth.

5. Garrison's crusade has moved through three discernible phases, in each of which CIA has played an increasingly ubiquitous and ominous role. Garrison first concentrated his efforts on the theory that Lee Harvey Oswald was but one figure in a conspiracy of Cuban exiles and sexual deviates of which Clay Shaw was alleged to be a leading figure. Apart from periodic and disconnected hints that various "suspects" had been connected with CIA at one time or another, Garrison assigned the Agency no clear part in the killing of President Kennedy nor in the alleged effort by the Government to suppress the truth.

6. By mid-1967 Garrison's case against Shaw had been examined rather thoroughly and shattered by, among others, The Saturday Evening Post and an NBC Special telecast. Phase two commenced at this time with Clay Shaw being all but discarded and relegated to minor status and Garrison now alleging that he was being victimized by a massive Government plot to suppress the "real" facts of the assassination. During the next several months Garrison directed a series of subpoenas and extradition requests at public and private individuals who were said to possess information, the revelation of which would expose the Government's suppression of vital information. Garrison's preoccupation with the Government's supposed obstruction of justice also conveniently obscured his own floundering for a new assassination theory to replace his Clay Shaw gambit. CIA began to figure more prominently in Garrison's public statements. Garrison came to argue during this period that CIA was informed of the assassination

before the fact, knew the identification of the "killers" (some of whom were "connected" with CIA), and was in fact not only suppressing such information (with the connivance of the Warren Commission members and staff and other Government figures, including President Johnson and Robert Kennedy) but was also "hiding" the assassins.

7. The third and current phase of Garrison's campaign began in late 1967. Garrison, by now in the tow of such assassination conspiracy theorists as Mark Lane and Mort Sahl, apparently concluded that CIA not only could be billed as the leading force in the suppression of truth but also could be cast convincingly as having actively participated in the assassination itself. Implicating CIA directly in the planning and execution of the President's murder also provided (for the first time) Garrison with a motive for the crime -- CIA "knew" that President Kennedy was moving toward a "detente" with the Soviets and the Cubans; and because CIA and other nefarious elements of the "establishment" have a vested interest in creating, maintaining, and exacerbating the "Cold War," President Kennedy had to be "eliminated." Along with a master villain and a tidy motive, Garrison also began weaving an intricate scenario of the actual assassination. Rather than a lone gunman -- indeed, Garrison now argues that Oswald was a "patsy" who never fired a shot -- Garrison contends that there were four assassination teams involving at least sixteen individuals who fired at the President from the grassy knoll, a sewer, and a second building in addition to the Book Depository.

8. Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Garrison's altogether remarkable genius for fantasy and web spinning is that he has yet to produce even a marginal piece of evidence which can be substantiated or stand the test of studied scrutiny. This can be no more aptly illustrated than in connection with the allegations he has made about CIA's supposed involvement. What follows is a list of several charges made by Garrison against CIA, each accompanied by a brief clarification.

- Lee Harvey Oswald and Jack Ruby were CIA "agents," and Oswald provided CIA information on the assassination from its inception. Garrison's "evidence" is a phone number in Oswald's diary, alleged to be the encoded number of CIA's office in Dallas, and information obtained from a "former CIA courier." In fact, the encoded CIA phone number has proved

to be sheer invention and "the courier" was subsequently identified as a psychotic with a penchant for pathological lying. The fact is the charges of CIA relationships with Oswald and Ruby are completely false.

- CIA (and the Warren Commission) have suppressed reports and other documents which "reveal" CIA's connections with various suspects and implicate CIA in the assassination. This charge is based on certain unclassified file titles of classified information CIA provided the Warren Commission during its proceedings. The fact is that the information is sensitive because of its sources or the methods used in its collection and not because of its pertinence to the work of the Commission.

- Oswald was accompanied by a CIA agent during his trip to Mexico City immediately prior to the assassination. This charge is based on Garrison's claim that CIA has suppressed a photograph which pictures Oswald and a CIA agent leaving the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City. No such photograph exists.

- CIA secretly paid for the June 1967 NBC Special telecast critical of Garrison. Untrue and patently absurd.

- CIA retained Clay Shaw's lawyers. False and also absurd.

- William Gurvich (one of Garrison's key staff men who resigned in July 1967 in public disillusionment with Garrison) was "set up" by the CIA and "infiltrated" Garrison's staff. False.

- Several men arrested (and subsequently released) at the scene of the assassination are connected with the Central Intelligence Agency. Garrison unveiled some photographs on the 31 January 1968 Johnny Carson show and claimed that "several men" pictured in the photographs were in the process of being arrested and were "connected with CIA." In fact, the pictures are from the photographic department of the Dallas Times Herald, whose managing editor evinced that he personally inspected the photographs and that they showed nothing more than some bystanders being routinely questioned by policemen.

9. There is perhaps no more suitable manner in which to conclude than with a series of quotes, without comment, from the grossest of the allegations by Garrison and his principal propagandist, Mort Sahl.

- "The Central Intelligence Agency...created the tableau -- the cover scene -- beforehand...this is standard for a CIA assassination...what I'm talking about is nothing less than fascism, which has arrived in America."
(Garrison, Dutch Television, February 1968)

- "He (Garrison) feels...that they (CIA) are involved in the death of Senator Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King."
(Sahl, Barry Gray Show, 30 June 1968)

- "We...have information that the FBI's been asked by the CIA to keep out of the King case."
(Sahl, Barry Gray Show, 30 June 1968)

- "Some people believe they (CIA) had to take his (President Kennedy's) life to control ours."
(Sahl, Merv Griffin Show, 8 July 1968)

- "Shaw, Bradley...Novel, Martin...worked for the CIA. These guys still get $300 a week."
(Sahl, Barry Gray Show, 30 June 1968)

- "When Senator Fulbright talked about auditing their budget last year, CIA people were in Arkansas working to unseat him."
(Sahl, Merv Griffin Show, 8 July 1968)

- "...I believe that if Senator McCarthy were elected and attempted to dismantle these people who have assumed power, I believe that they (CIA) would kill him."
(Sahl, Barry Gray Show, 30 June 1968)